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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000525

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SE GRATION, S/USSES, AF A A/S, AF/C
NSC FOR MGA VIN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/15/2019

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: CHADIAN REBELS EXPECT TO BE ATTACKED BY CHADIAN
ARMY AND JEM

REF: A. KHARTOUM 212

[B](#). KHARTOUM 118

[C](#). KHARTOUM 106

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#). (C) The Chadian army will soon attack Chadian rebels at their positions inside the borders of Chad, RFC Chadian rebel commander (and close associate of UFR President Timane Erdimi) Mahamat Hanno told polchief April 15 in Khartoum. Hanno claimed that the Chadian rebels now have fully unified both the political and military commands of all the rebels movements, and currently number more than 10,000 fighters. He said that the entire Chadian rebel army is already inside Chad, just across the border from El Geneina in West Darfur (Sudan), in the hills and valleys surrounding an area known as Hajar al Marfein.

[2](#). (C) UNAMID poloff Hideo Ikebe also confirmed April 15 that the Chadian rebels have all left their former positions inside Sudan, and that numerous convoys have carried them and their equipment to new locations inside Chad. Ikebe believes that an attack by the Chadian rebels against the Chadian army is unlikely as the GOS sent a high-level delegation (Presidential Advisors Nafie Ali Nafie and Mustafa Othman Ismail) to Paris earlier this week. Ikebe assumes that the Chadian rebels follow orders from Khartoum, something the rebels themselves deny, but he did not discount the possibility of the Chadian army or JEM attacking the Chadian rebels.

[3](#). (C) Joining Hanno in the meeting was UFDD Chadian rebel Foreign Relations Secretary Muktar ben Yaya, who claimed that the bulk of the Chadian army has moved into positions close to the Chadian rebels "within striking distance," and said that he expects an attack in the coming days or weeks. Muktar and Hanno believe that Chadian President Deby wants to send a message that he is strong and can defeat the rebels before they make a move toward Ndjamena. Hanno claimed that he has heard from sources within the Chadian army that President Deby has obliged JEM to participate in the planned campaign against the Chadian rebels. They have heard that in exchange JEM will receive thirty landcruisers and additional supplies. Hanno estimated the current vehicle strength of JEM as "not more than one hundred vehicles in total - they are weaker than before the attacks against Muhajaria," but said that also JEM lacks fighters - he estimated they currently have somewhere between 700 and 1000. Hanno claimed to have learned from sources in Ndjamena that "most of the army has left town to attack the rebellion in the East," and

that some of the city's population (perceived as loyal to the rebels) have preemptively moved to Cameroon because they "expect reprisals when the rebels move on Ndjamena after defeating the Chadian army in the East." SLM leader Minni Minnawi, speaking from Darfur, told CDA Fernandez on April 16 that JEM is feverishly "buying fighters" in order to boost their numbers and that JEM will not shrink from attacking the Chadian rebels before they attack the ANT.

14. (C) Hanno repeated earlier requests that the U.S. demonstrate its interest in peace in Sudan/Darfur and Chad by first meeting with the Chadian rebels and then mediating talks between the rebels and President Deby. Hanno said that the rebellion would prefer to resolve their differences with the repressive President Deby peacefully, "but he cannot be trusted to implement agreements so we will not negotiate with him unless the U.S., EU, AU, or UN mediates." Hanno suggested that if the U.S. is willing to meet with the Chadian rebel leadership at a senior level, a meeting could quickly be arranged in Europe "in any of the Schengen visa countries." Hanno requested a response to the February 14 letter that URF President Erdimi sent to AF/C Director Wycoff (Ref A) requesting a meeting. Polchief promised to check with Washington on a formal reply, but encouraged Hanno and Muktar to pass a message to Erdimi that an attack by the Chadian rebels would be viewed badly by the new U.S. Administration and would not serve their interests, and encouraged them instead to pursue dialogue with President Deby.

15. (C) Comment: While it is difficult to predict with any accuracy whether or when rebel movements (be they Sudanese or Chadian) might mount an attack, it is significant that the

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entire Chadian rebel force seems to have moved from Sudan into Chad, albeit just inside the border. An attack against Chad by the rebels certainly is not in Sudan's immediate interests at this point (unless if they can quickly knock out Deby, which seems very unlikely). Perhaps that is why the Chadian rebels are waiting for the Chadian army to attack first - or claiming that to be the case. If the Chadian army does not attack and the rebels are instructed by Khartoum not to leave their positions, the dry season may end this summer without any major proxy battles. This would certainly be a change from the recent history of bloody annual clashes over the past three years - but somehow it seems too optimistic. Post requests guidance on a response to Erdimi's letter, and whether AF/C would like us to help arrange a meeting or phone call. End comment.
FERNANDEZ